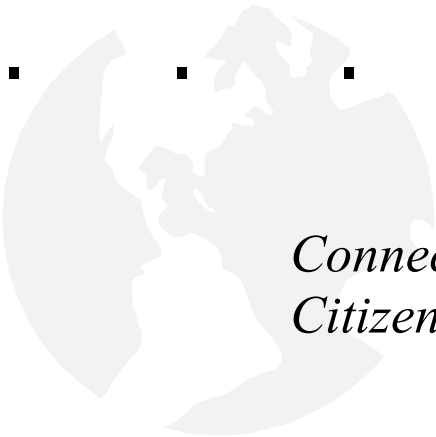




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Virtual Town Hall®, LLC

Getting Started Guide



*Connecting Communities and
Citizens through the Internet*

Welcome to Virtual Town Hall®

Virtual Town Hall®, LLC (VTH) assists small and medium-sized municipal governments to implement electronic government.

"Wow!", you might be thinking, "What does that mean?"

town hall: A physical location where people call or walk-in to get information and services from their local government

virtual town hall: A town hall that's open 24 hours a day, every day. Located on the Internet, this town hall breaks down the barriers of time and distance to allow people to get municipal information and services, when and where they want.

municipal government: People in an incorporated area having self government. It might be a town, city, village, township, borough, or county. The population might be in the tens of thousands or less than 100. We work with them all. Municipal governments are our only customers.

electronic or e-government: Government activities that take place by digital processes over a computer network, usually the Internet, between the government and members of the public. These activities generally involve the electronic exchange of information to acquire or provide products or services, to place or receive orders, to provide or obtain information, or to complete financial transactions. In addition, electronic government provides direct communications between legislators and their constituents via e-mail.

VTH is based in Portland, Maine, and has been in business since 1997.

Purpose of this Guide

This guide is your first lesson in using VTH to provide e-government services. In most cases, this means maintaining the municipal website. However, VTH does provide other services including email, hosting Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and online recreation registration.

If you are considering adding **any** service to your website, give us a call. It's likely we either already offer the service or have it in the works, pending customer demand.

Is This Guide For You?

It is assumed the reader is a regular personal computer user and familiar with the basic concepts of the Internet, word processing, and e-mail. No new technical term is introduced in this guide without defining it. However, basic computer terms are used throughout. If you are unfamiliar with a term, check with your local computer experts or consult a written or online computer dictionary.

It is further assumed that the reader works for, either in a paid or volunteer capacity, some kind of municipal entity, such as a town, city, borough, township, village, or county. In this guide you will notice that sometimes we talk about towns, sometimes about cities, and sometimes about municipalities. Do not be distracted by this – we mean you! The benefits, features, and tips discussed are just as relevant to the village of 2,000 as the city of 200,000. It is all a matter of degree.

How This Guide is Organized

The main sections of this guide are:

- The Basics of FirstClass
- About the Virtual Town Hall® desktop
- Getting More Help

The Basics of FirstClass

FirstClass® is the software you use to manage your Virtual Town Hall® website. It provides you with secure access for authorized users, and the ability to post new items to web folders and calendars.

FirstClass® is a product of the Open Text Corporation. Here is a description of the software from their website:

" FirstClass Communications Platform is our collaborative groupware, which gives you the ability to effectively communicate and share valuable resources and information via e-mail, conferencing, directories, individual and shared calendars and online chats. FirstClass has been used by thousands of organizations to create **powerful online electronic communities** that enable individuals and groups of people to work more effectively."

VTH adapted FirstClass® to build municipal websites and provide easy content management once the site is live. We also use FirstClass® for email internally and for our customers who ask us to provide them with email software.

The following tutorial provides instructions for installing the FirstClass client on your computer. If you have further questions, contact our customer support line at (207) 772.7324 ext 228, or send a support question, and we will be happy to assist you.

This section includes instructions for the following tasks:

- Adding FirstClass to your computer
- Logging in for the first time
- Changing your password

Adding FirstClass to your computer

Make sure you have an account. In order to log in to your account, you first need to install the software on your computer. Requesting user accounts is the responsibility of the primary liaison between your town and Virtual Town Hall®. We can't set you up if we don't know you're out there.

All VTH users must install their own copy of FirstClass® on their computers. Follow the steps below to do the installation:

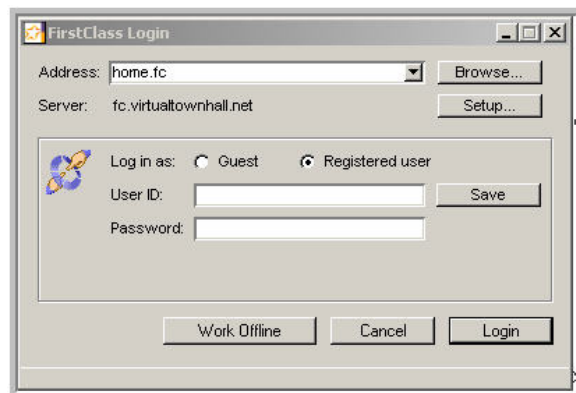
1. Open your Internet browser (Internet Explorer or Netscape).
2. In the Location or Address text box, type the Internet address for the Virtual Town Hall® Website: www.virtualtownhall.net. The VTH Home page appears.
3. On the VTH Home page, under the heading Online Services, click on Download FirstClass. The FirstClass download page appears.
4. Click on the appropriate download. The FirstClass software will download to your computer's Desktop. This will take 3 minutes with a high speed Internet connection, and up to 20 minutes with a dial-up modem.
5. When the download is complete, open the program to install FirstClass.



When the installation finishes, a FirstClass icon will be left on your computer's desktop.

Logging In for the first time

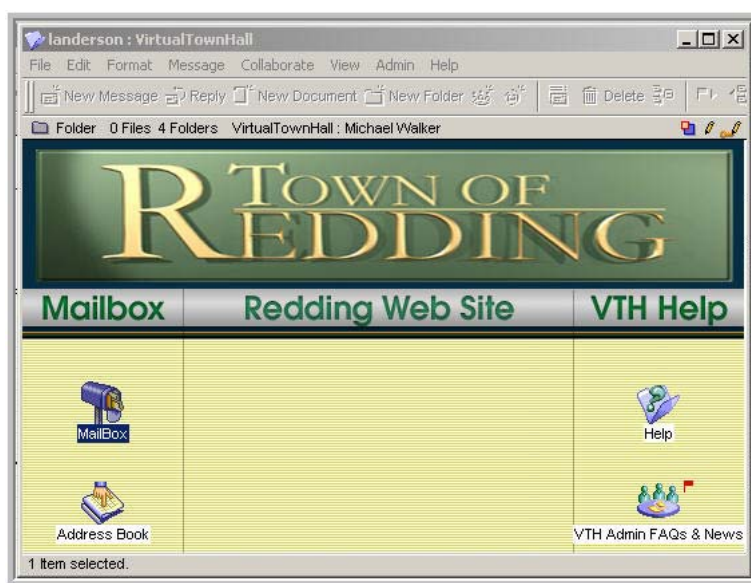
1. Double-click on the FirstClass icon. The Login dialog box appears.



2. Type your User ID. Click **Save**.
3. Type your Password. The first time you login, your default password is *changeme*

4. Click **Login**.

Your Virtual Town Hall® desktop appears. **Note:** Each desktop is customized so yours may not look like the one below.



Changing your password

To change your password:

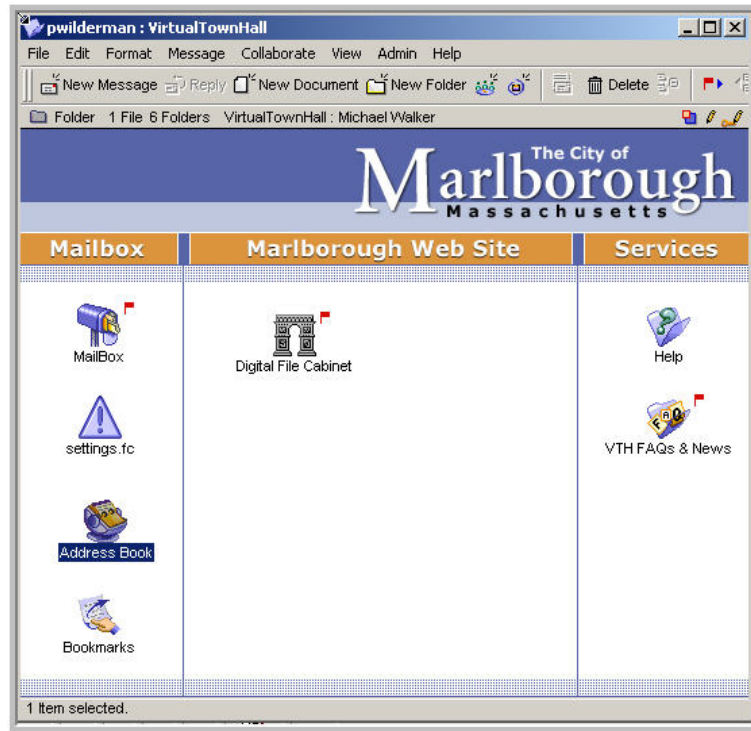
1. Choose **Collaborate > Change Password**.
The Change Password dialog box appears.



2. In the **Old password** field, type your current password.
3. In the **New password** field, type your new password (maximum 12 characters).
Tip: Try to use a password you use for other things. This makes it easier to remember.
4. In the **Retype password** field, type your new password again to verify it.
5. Click **OK**.

About the Virtual Town® Hall Desktop

The VTH desktop is where everything begins for your "virtual town hall". The desktop normally displays icons for your mailbox, Digital File Cabinet, calendars, VTH FAQs and News, and Help.



The following sections explain the Mailbox, Digital File Cabinet, Help, and VTH FAQs and News icons on a basic desktop. Your desktop may have additional icons on it, and they will be explained to you during initial training.

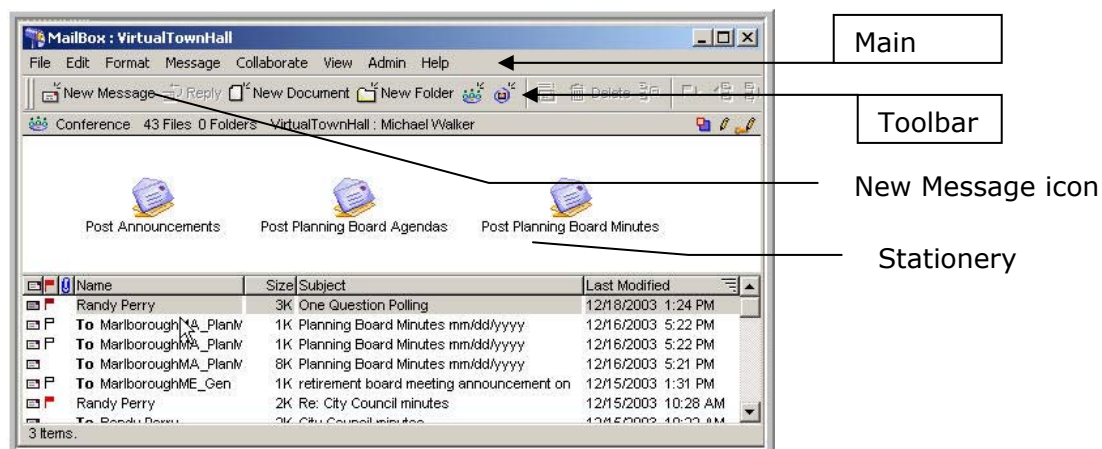
If you have further questions, contact our customer support line at (207) 772.7324 ext 228, or send a support question, and we will be happy to assist you.

Mailbox

The Mailbox is the core of the Virtual Town Hall® service. First Class is, among other things, an Email application -- much like Outlook®, Eudora®, etc. Your mailbox is where you send and receive Email as well as send public notices and post meeting minutes. Comments sent from your Web site by a visitor may also appear in your mailbox if you have been set up to receive them. If you are not using FirstClass as your primary mailbox you will want to enter a forwarding address. See "Customizing your Virtual Town Hall® Desktop".

You send mail from your mailbox by either clicking on the "New Message" icon on the toolbar, or by choosing "Message -> New Message" from your menu options. A copy of all messages you have sent will remain in your mailbox unless you delete them. You can also create folders to organize and store messages.

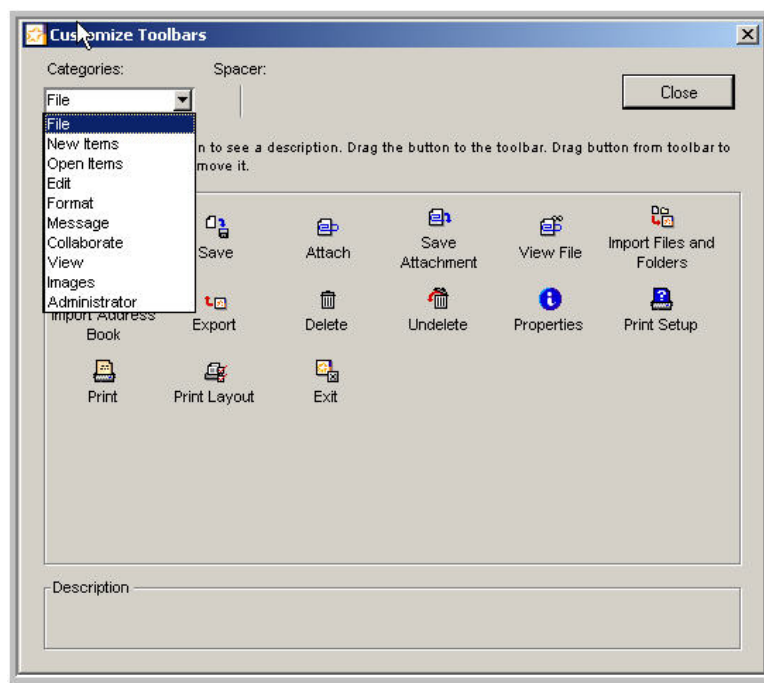
You may also have special, pre-addressed stationery icons in your desktop to make it easier for frequent postings.



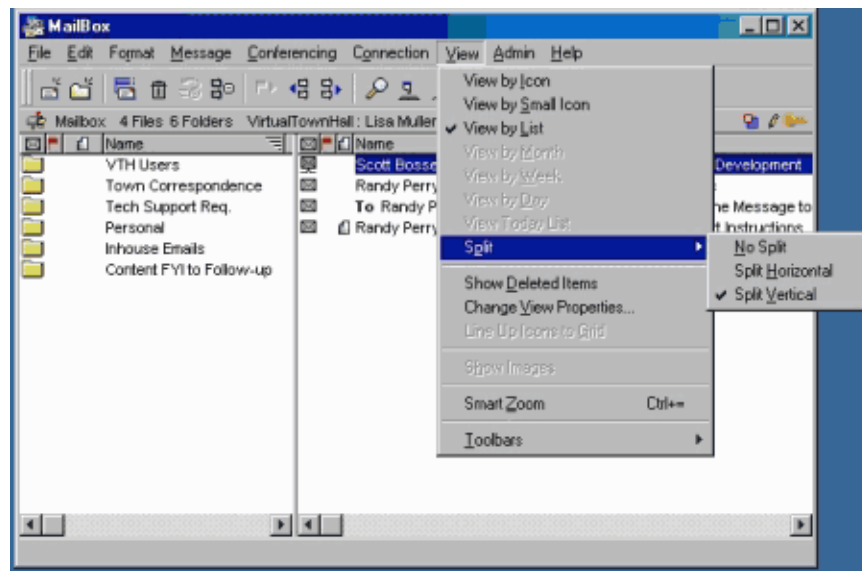
There are two ways of performing operations within the Virtual Town Hall®. The first is to use the Main Menu commands at the top of each window. From your desktop the menu choices are as follows: **File - Edit - Format - Message - Collaborate - View - Help**.

The second way is to use the icons on the Toolbar. **Tip: If you hold the mouse arrow over any icon, FirstClass displays the function of that icon as a pop-up near the icon.**

To make life easier, you can customize your tool bar by selecting: **View - Toolbar - Customize Toolbars**. You can drag and drop icons from the category windows to your toolbar and place them wherever you wish. You can delete unneeded icons by dragging them off the toolbar and dropping them into the category window.



You also have the capability of splitting the view of your Mailbox. On the Menu, click on View > Split. Your choices are to split the screen vertically or horizontally (the example below is split vertically). This allows for you to view your folders and your mail in different frames. If you have an email archives folder that you store emails within, this split screen comes in very handy.



Digital File Cabinet

Think of a website as a collection of pages. The Digital File Cabinet contains all the pages for your website, arranged inside. Each department has one or more folders in which its pages are stored.

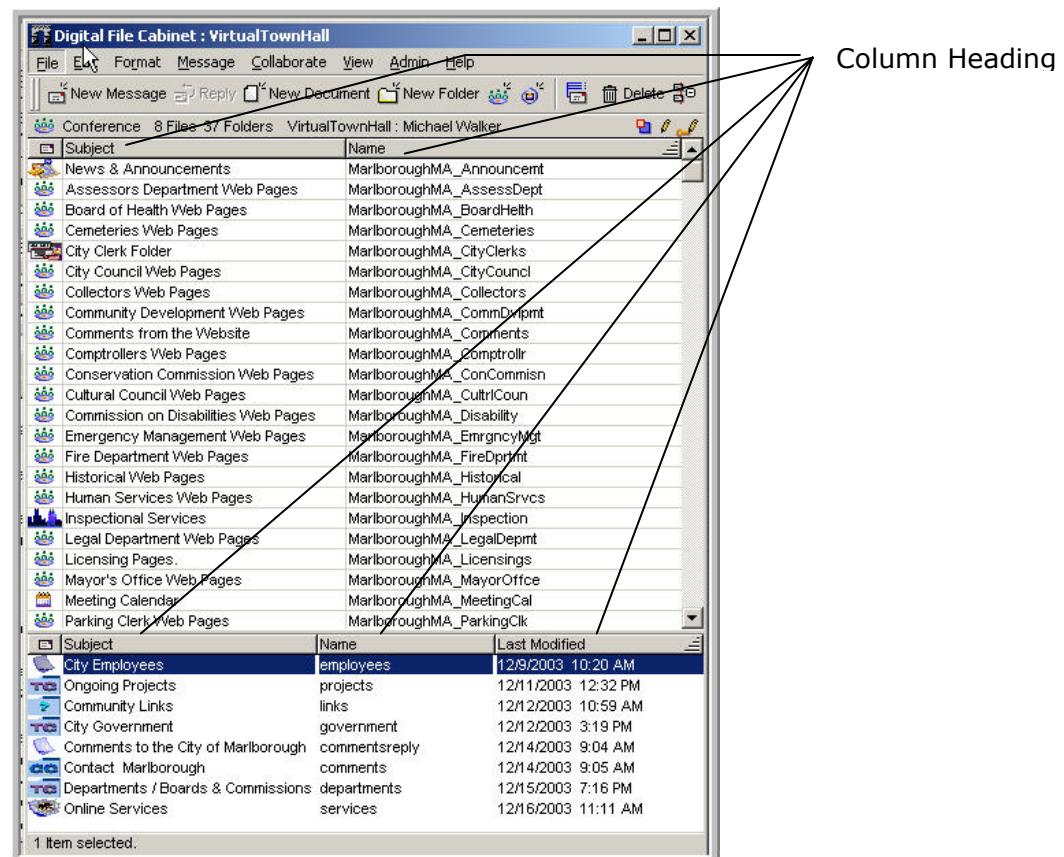
In addition, the file cabinet is split in two parts, with the folders above the split and specially-designed main pages below the split

Each folder has a **Subject** and **Name**. The Subject is an expanded description of the folder. The Subject often appears at the top of a web page, functioning as the title of the page. The Name is used by the web browser to find the folder. You find the Name in the Address bar of the browser. For example,

http://www.marlborough-ma.gov/Gen/MarlboroughMA_MayorOffice/index

In addition, a column titled Last Modified is often used. This is the date the folder was created.

Clicking on a heading sorts all the folders according to that heading, alphabetically for Subject and Name, chronologically for Last Modified. Clicking a second time reverses the order. This is also true for the contents of a folder.



To open a folder, double-click on it. The folder opens and you see a list of all the pages and sub-folders it contains. Using folders this way makes it easier to manage the hundreds of pages that make up a good municipal website.

Help

The **Help** folder is a collection of First Class documents that provide highly detailed examples and explanations. To read the help documentation, simply open the folder and click on a topic. Note that the folders at the top are help documentation that was written by Open Text® (the makers of First Class®), and comes with the server. The topics below were created by the Virtual Town Hall®.

VTH FAQs & News

The **VTH FAQs & News** is a folder that we use to communicate with our users en masse, notifying you of new features, upcoming events, and (hopefully) providing answers to some of the more common questions we receive.

Getting More Help

There are several options for getting help with FirstClass® or website problems.

- FirstClass has a Help function on the Main Menu.
- There is a Help icon on your VTH desktop.
- The Online Help button on the forms.
- There is a VTH FAQs & News icon on your VTH desktop.
- Call or e-mail our Customer Support. 207.772.7324 ext.228
- Related Publications
 - *How Do I...* - task-oriented documentation
 - *Editing & Creating Web Pages* - documentation of all the VTH forms
 - *Getting the Most Out of VTH* - covers questions of what content to include on the website and how to publicize it
 - *Email Users Guide* - for VTH customers using FirstClass as their email software

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